



WIC FACT SHEET

Description

The Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is a food and nutrition assistance program for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and post-partum women and children under age five who are at nutritional risk. The goal of the WIC program is to decrease the risk of poor birth outcomes and to improve the health of participants during critical times of growth and development. To meet this goal, WIC provides nutrition education, breastfeeding services, referrals to medical care and social services and checks to purchase specific, nutritious foods.

The specific nutritious foods provided to participants include milk, cheese, eggs, beans, peanut butter, iron-fortified cereal, iron-fortified infant formula and juice. The supplemental foods provided are selected to meet the participant's dietary needs for specific nutrients during brief but critical periods of physiological development.

Eligibility

WIC is available to pregnant, breastfeeding and post-partum women and children under five who are at nutritional risk and at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level.

Over half of the women and children on WIC in California are members of a family where one or both parents work outside the home. Working families are among the most unlikely to know of WIC services. Many think WIC is a welfare program and that they are not eligible because they work. The WIC Program has used a variety of approaches to increase program awareness encourage families to participate.

Program Effectiveness

Numerous scientific studies show that pregnant women who participate in the WIC program seek earlier prenatal care and consume a healthier diet. The improved nutrition and nutrition education provided to enrolled women and children result in longer pregnancies, fewer and very low birth weight babies, and fewer fetal and infant deaths. This translates into enormous savings in health care dollars. Research shows a savings of \$3.50 for every \$1.00 spent on WIC. Additional savings could be realized if more pregnant women were enrolled on the program.

Program Funding and Administration

WIC is 100 percent federally funded with grants allocated to states by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The California Department of Health Services (DHS) administers the WIC Program through contracts with local county and private non-profit agencies that provide WIC services in local WIC centers throughout California. Over 3,900 retail stores have DHS agreements to redeem WIC checks.

WIC has been well received by policy makers. Funding increases have allowed WIC to increase from 520,000 participants a month in 1991 to over 1.3 million participants in 2005. To maximize funds, WIC obtains rebate with infant formula, cereal and juice manufacturers, allowing WIC to serve 400,000 more women and children each month

For More Information California WIC's website can be located at www.wicworks.ca.gov

